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SUBJECT: NANGARHAR POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: THE PARTIES

¶1. (SBU) Summary and introduction: In Nangarhar, the most influential political institutions are the Jihadi parties, which capitalize on bonds formed between Jihadi commanders and tribal leaders during the Mujahadin period of the 1990s. In the fight against the Soviets, the Jihadi commanders provided material support to tribal leaders to win their loyalty. The commanders also promoted themselves as the defenders of Islam, which won the affection of Nangarhar residents. Tribal leaders now defer to the former Jihadi commanders and accept them as political leaders. Tribal shuras are also important, but tend to support former Jihadi leaders rather than driving the political agenda. Loyalties to a particular commander trump political ideology when forming electoral coalitions. Most Nangarhar political parties support President Karzai, but there are no formal alliances between these parties. The most influential parties in Nangarhar are as follows:

HIA and HIK

¶2. (SBU) In Nangarhar, Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) and Hezb-e-Islami Khalis (HIK) factions, led by former Nangarhar and current Kabul Governor Din Mohammad, exercise the most influence. Both of these parties emerged from the original Hezb-e-Islami movement founded by Gulbuddin Hekmetyar (HIG). Hekmetyar's faction radicalized to oppose the presence of international forces in Afghanistan. More moderate members of the movement supported the new Afghan leadership and formed a shura in the name of Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), which registered with the Ministry of Justice as a new political party. However, in Nangarhar the connections remain strong, and HIA is still popularly known as HIG.

¶3. (SBU) Three Nangarharis -- Engineer Gaffar, Dr. Fazal Mohammad Ibrahim (currently an advisor in the Public Health Ministry), and Mawlawi Attaullah Lodin (currently a parliamentarian) -- lead HIA in the eastern region and are members of the national HIA shura. HIA enjoys strong support from the Nangarhar community. It is the only party in the region to have established district level councils in all 22 Nangarhar districts, holding frequent public meetings all over the province.

¶4. (SBU) Although it sprang from the same movement, the Khalis faction of Hezb-e-Islami (HIK) has opposed Hekmetyar since early in the Mujahadin period. When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, HIK split into two factions: the extremist group led by Younas Khalis, which continued to support the Taliban, while the more moderate faction led by the late Haji Qadir fought against them. After the Taliban's fall, Qadir's faction supported the new government, seized control of the Nangarhar government, and worked with coalition

forces (although the relationship was often rocky). The Nangarhar Jihadi Shura installed Qadir as Nangarhar Governor in 2001. He then moved to Kabul to become the Public Works Minister and Second Vice President during the transitional government.

¶5. (SBU) Qadir was the key HIK leader until 2002 when he was assassinated in Kabul. After Qadir's death, his brother Haji Din Mohammad took the lead of the party and became governor of Nangarhar. Presently Din Mohammad runs the national leadership of this moderate faction through a shura located in Nangarhar. Dr. Asef Qazizada, one of the shura members, is the eastern region HIK focal point and public face of the party in Nangarhar.

¶6. (SBU) After the split, Khalis's faction remained opposed to the new government and involved in insurgent activities. Khalis issued a fatwa saying jihad should be waged against the new Afghan Government and coalition forces. Khalis's son Anwar ul Haq Mujaheed now leads this extremist faction, called the Tora Bora Front. Although well known in the province, they announced a boycott of the government, do not participate in elections, and are widely recognized as an insurgent group. The Tora Bora Front is most influential in southwest Nangarhar in the Khogyani tribal area.

Northern Alliance

¶7. (SBU) In Nangarhar, the Naween and Jamiat-e-Islami parties compete during elections, but both actively support the United Front (which is locally seen as simply the reincarnation of the Northern Alliance) and in local politics are seen as one entity. Ethnic tensions and tribal loyalties dominate the relationship between these two parties and others in Nangarhar. The United Front does

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not have wide support in Nangarhar, but most Pashaii from the north of the province (who are ethnically and linguistically distinct from Pashtuns) support the Northern Alliance. Only small numbers of Nangarhar Pashtun support the Northern Alliance.

¶8. (SBU) When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Jamiat-e-Islami formed an active resistance force in the region, with the Pashaii Hazrat Ali and the Mohmand Pashtun Shahzada Mazlumyar at the head of the party. During the Taliban period, Hazrat Ali, a Pashaii commander from northern Nangarhar, led the Northern Alliance forces in Nangarhar. After the Taliban's fall, he remained the Alliance's regional head and led the Jamiat-e-Islami in the eastern region. Leading up to the 2004 presidential election, Hazrat Ali threw his support to Qanooni's new Naween Party.

Sayaf Party

¶9. (SBU) The Hezb-e-Tanzemi Dawat-e-Islami Afghanistan (Sayaf Party) is a former Jihadi party. The party's Nangarhar influence is mostly centered in Shinwari districts in southeast Nangarhar and Chaparhar District south of Jalalabad. Previously, the party's influence was limited in Nangarhar, but it is now on the rise. The late Abdul Halim Malingyar, who was a powerful commander from the southeast of the province, was the party's regional head until his death in 2007. Haji Awal Khan took over as the regional head of the party after Malingyar's death. Fazal Hadi Muslimyar, one of Malingyar's proteges and the Nangarhar Provincial Council Chairman, is the party's provincial head and is the most active party leader in the eastern region. His success in gaining the Provincial Council leadership is largely responsible for the party's increasing influence. The Sayaf Party strongly supports President Karzai, but may now be hedging its bets.

Afghan Millat Party

¶10. (SBU) The Pashtun-nationalist Afghan Millat is not a Jihadi party and is thus less reliant on personal loyalties to its leadership for influence. Engineer Gul Hussein and Malim Gul Mohammad lead the party in Nangarhar, but are not seen as individually influential. Most Afghan Millat members in Nangarhar support the party out of a sense of Pashtun identity. Nangarhar Afghan Millat members tend to support the idea that Pashtuns should dominate Afghan politics and feel a close affinity to the Awami

National Party (ANP) from Pakistan, although Nangarhar party officials claim there is no formal link with the Pakistani party. Although Afghan Millat enjoys some support in all tribal areas, it is mainly influential in northeastern Nangarhar. The party's center of support is among the Mohmand tribe, which mostly occupies the northeast and central portions of Nangarhar and overlaps the border with Pakistan into the Mohmand Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Area. Teachers and the education establishment strongly support Afghan Millat in Nangarhar.

PDPA

¶11. (SBU) The leftist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) is fractured in Nangarhar, but appears to be experiencing a resurgence. Nangarhar residents perceive that much of the Afghan security forces' leadership is sympathetic to the PDPA although not formally affiliated with this party. Most of the PDPA support is centered in Jalalabad, although there are small pockets of support scattered throughout the province.

New to the Scene

¶12. (SBU) Two new parties may prove influential in the coming elections:

-- Hezb-e-Jamhori Afghanistan (Republican Party of Afghanistan), with Provincial Council Deputy Chairman Mawlawi Abdul Aziz as the provincial head, launched in March 2008. The party's main constituency is the Ulema (Islamic religious scholars) community. It is firmly supporting President Karzai. Behind the scenes, Governor Sherzai is supporting this party (his Mahaz-e-Mili Party enjoys little support in Nangarhar, probably because it is associated with southern tribal Pashtuns).

-- The Sole Carwan (Peace Caravan), founded by Haji Qadir's son Haji Zahir, launched in May 2008. Zahir claims he aims to create a party

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of rejuvenation, focusing on youth development. He uses this platform to oppose openly Governor Sherzai and has stated that he and his party will oppose President Karzai in the upcoming elections.

One to Watch: Awami National Party

¶13. (SBU) With their recent success in the Pakistani parliamentary elections, many Nangarhar political players are reaching out to the Awami National Party (ANP). For example, Haji Zahir sent a delegation of influential elders to Peshawar to extend Nangarhar's congratulations on the ANP's success in the recent Pakistani elections. The ANP has a natural following in Nangarhar. It widely supports traditional Pashtun cultural celebrations in Nangarhar, such as poetry readings and festivals, which endears the party to the local populace. Although its founder Ghafar Khan Pacha lived in Peshawar, Pakistan, he refused to be buried there and was interred in Jalalabad during the communist government under Najibullah. The ANP holds an annual gathering in Jalalabad to commemorate Ghafar Khan's burial. They announced in 2007 they would form a foundation, called the Ghafar Khan Welfare Trust, to assist in Nangarhar reconstruction. The party has two acknowledged and close allies in Nangarhar -- Afghan Millat and the former communists -- although they claim no official links. Najibullah's government openly provided financial support to the ANP during the communist regime in return for information and support on the Pakistan side of the border. Local residents speculate that the Nangarhar intelligence services maintain these old contacts for the same reasons today. People also speculate that Governor Sherzai has indirect contacts with the ANP, although he publicly denies this and has been feuding with ANP leaders since his days in exile in Quetta.

WOOD